

## Story Time

When the end of the day came, I breathed a sigh of relief. It was a big rst day. A lot of people had been waiting the whole week to come out and buy supplies.

Emmalyn reminded me that our whole rst week could be like this, because so many people would want to see the new witch in town. That made me simultaneously thrilled and exhausted. My rst week would be a probable one, for sure.

Saturday night was the next vampire night. I was interested to see how that went and eager to see real vampires up close. I'd never met a vampire before... at least, not that I knew of.

After I nished the evening paperwork and locked the money up in the safe, I went around the shop collecting items for a soothing salve for my butt. It was one of the things I'd learned to make by heart. One of my exes bruised like a peach. It would have me all healed up and ready for work in the morning.

I mixed everything together and hummed happily as I locked up and headed to my apartment. Once there, I pulled out ingredients for my dinner and started putting it together. I was making a veggie stir-fry with tofu chunks I'd marinated all day.

After rinsing my rice, I started it cooking in the rice cooker, one of the few things I'd brought from home. I cut up my veggies and mixed up my sauce. It was a white miso sauce recipe I got online.

Once my vegetables were all cooked I added the sauce in and simmered it to thicken. The smell of it made my stomach growl. After it was done, I piled rice into one bowl and my stir-fry into another.

The kitchen chair was hard and made the bruise on my butt sting, but I wasn't up for standing to eat after standing all day at work and cooking my dinner. I put a cushion on the seat and gingerly sat on it. My dinner was delicious and I mowed through it all quickly.

Working all day had made me feel close to starved and tired as heck. It was a wonderful feeling, because I knew it was from hard work and not from boredom. I got up and washed my dishes before heading for a bath.

The tub wasn't really long enough for me to soak in. It was perfect for an average height woman, just not for me. I bent my knees until my chest was in the water and sighed. I would need to work out a savings budget to renovate the apartment. I denitely needed a soaker tub and a shower that was at least big enough for two people.

I applied the salve to my bruised bottom after I was dry and went to lay in bed. I pulled out my phone and texted my mom, letting her know I had a good day and everything was ne. There was an email from Auntie Tonya.

In the email, she told me what a wonderful time she was having and included some pictures of the ship, her room, and a few people she said were her new friends. I smiled I was happy that she was having a good time. I wrote out a quick email with an update on how things were going here, leaving out my new friend and our activities.

As I curled up under the blankets, I couldn't help imagining what would happen next. I wanted the shop to be moderately successful and able to support me. I would remodel the apartment and have a comfortable place to live. I would do my soulmate search when I was settled and ready for marriage. It would be a good life.

The next day was just as busy as the rst, like Emmalyn said it would be. I was out helping people nd things with my new set up. I wandered into the teahouse and talked with customers there.

Everyone seemed friendly and polite. I was getting used to being around shape shifters. The dizziness faded into a mild buzz when I was around them. Maybe all I needed was to be around them often.

It was about two in the afternoon when a delivery man came in with owers. I felt my stomach drop. They were live stargazer lilies. My favorite.

"Can I help you?" I asked, cutting him off halfway through the shop.

"Clover Harrison?" He asked.

"Yes."

"I have a delivery for you. Can you sign here?" He replied.

I took his little clipboard and signed where it had the customer signature line. I handed it back and he gave me the ower pot. He left and I closed my eyes. Please don't be from Steven.

Walking over to the counter, I set the owers down. They were a little frazzled at being moved from where they'd been previously and driven around town. Plants didn't like going on trips. I calmed them and found the plastic stand they were complaining about being too close to their roots.

Pulling it out, I took the card from the stand. I had to read it a few times and sighed in relief. They were from my mother. I found the perfect place for the owers and set them up. They would be a happy reminder that my parents still loved me.

"You looked like you were going to panic for a moment." Jen said to me.

"I thought they were from Steven. I was about to freak." I chuckled.

"Who's Steven?" Emmalyn asked.

I gured she would nd out soon enough and told her. She was hanging on every word. I sighed when I nished.

"Wow. Sounds like you have a serious stalker issue. You should tell Queen Bellamy about that. She can make it uncomfortable for him." She offered.

"Why would she bother making my stalker uncomfortable?" I asked.

"Then, you don't know the story about how Queen Bellamy met Alpha Lucien?"

"I gured they were mates, right? That's how shapeshifters do it. They are drawn to their fated mates through a physical thing sight or smell." I guessed.

"No. Rogue born wolves don't have mates. Otherwise, all supernaturals, except for witches, have something like that. I met a fae who told me that about a year ago. I lived with them for a few weeks. Them, some werewolves, and some vampires." Emmalyn answered with a warm smile.

"Wow, you're really pretty when you smile like that. It must have been a happy time for you. Why'd you come back?" I asked.

"I was only there to help relieve a curse an ancestor of mine put on the territory. I grew fond of everyone in that house. I text with Echo all the time. She's a dhampyr, mostly vampire, but also part witch and part werewolf." She said.

"That's so cool. I didn't realize other supernaturals mingled so much. I was raised in a coven town. Everyone there is part of the coven or human relatives." I told her.

"I've heard of coven towns. You're really isolated. It would be so weird to grow up in a place with only witches and humans." Emmalyn shook her head.

"Tell her how the Queen and Alpha met. I love this story, but I always get it mixed up." Jen grinned.

I leaned against the counter and Jen bounced a little as Emmalyn nodded. It was like story time for little kids. A few customers drew close to hear it as well.

"About three years ago, Queen Bellamy lived with the Daylight Moon Pack. She was a rogue born wolf who had been adopted by pack wolves. At twelve she started her own collective, by eighteen, she was running one of the largest collectives in Oregon and southern Washington. But, she was missing something. A family. A real family that was only hers.

One night she overheard some vampires talking about an Alpha they'd captured. She was worried about another werewolf being forcefully fed on by vampires and what could become of the Alpha's territory if he was turned or killed. So she convinced the vampires to take her as a servant. That was where she found Alpha Lucien.

Together, they made a plan to defeat the vampires and free him from the magic they used to keep him in a rundown shack. Once they set the vampires on re, they ran for the safety of Daylight Moon. In this time, they fell in love. Deeply and passionately in love. A love that was as powerful as they were." Emmalyn told us.

"That's a lovely story, but how does it explain why she cares about stalkers?" I asked.

"Shush, she's getting there." Jen hissed.

"It turned out that the vampires had turned an assassin who was hired to hunt and kill Alpha Lucien by a Rogue King named Kyle Fuller. He was obsessed with Bellamy. He believed they were destined mates, even though rogue born wolves don't have destined mates.

Kyle was hell bent on getting Bellamy to be his. He believed the best way to do that was to kill the Alpha who had banished her parents from his pack and take that pack over to give to her as part of her territory. Kyle didn't know that his actions would drive Bellamy into the arms of a man who was so perfect for her. A man who called her his miracle third chance mate.

Lucien ended up killing Kyle in a duel. Bellamy vowed that people in her territory would be safe from things like that. Obsessed males and females are dissuaded and she nds ways to keep them from the object of their obsession.

At least, that's what she did to mine. He tried to kidnap me! She banished him for a while, then made him go to counseling to help him realize what he was doing was wrong. Now he has missions that keep him on the outskirts of the territory most of the time. She usually warns me if he's going to be in the territory. He's not as bad as he used to be, but he's still annoying as hell." Emmalyn grumbled.

"You have a stalker?" I gasped.

"Yes. A crazy womanizing rogue werewolf. He's decided that I'm destined to be his mate. I told him repeatedly that I knew for a fact rogues don't have fated mates, but he said his wolf decided it was me and he would win me no matter what." She scoffed. "That's never going to happen. I'm just hoping he meets someone else he can hyperfocus on. He's managed to nd out each time I've had a date and come to ruin it."

"Wow. I'm sorry you're having to deal with that. At least you have someone who understands you now." I chuckled.

"That's true. Okay, kids, story time is over, buy something or get out." Emmalyn said to the crowd coolly.

A few people laughed and they scattered to do their shopping. I had no idea that Emmalyn could have had such a past. I guess you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. She'd seen a lot more of the world than I had, but we had the same struggle. I was glad to have her on my side.

Josh texted me a few hours later that he was hosting a family dinner like I said and he hoped my spell worked out. He didn't want to leave his father's company, but he wouldn't work beneath his brother just because he was getting his life set up before jumping into marriage.

I replied that I knew it would work and, if he did end up leaving his father's company, I would be his rst client. He thanked me and we ended our chat. This was the kind of life I was looking for. Friends, work, happiness, and freedom.